EXAMPLES · OF LETTERING AND · DESIGN

J. LITTLEJOHNS, R.B.A., A.R.B.C.

TAYLORS' ART SALOON,
SCHOOLHILL, ABERDEEN.

C. I. Allan

EXAMPLES · OF LETTERING AND · DESIGN

By

J. LITTLEJOHNS, *R.B.A., A.R.B.C.*

Author of the "Art for All" Drawing Series, the "Art for All" Water-Colour Series, Joint Author of "The Technique of Water Colour Painting" & "The Art of Painting in Pastel."

SIR · ISAAC · PITMAN · & · SONS · LTD.
PARKER · ST., KINGSWAY, LONDON, *W.C.2*
BATH · MELBOURNE · TORONTO · NEW YORK
1928

FROM THE SAME PUBLISHERS

Decorative Writing and Arrangement of Lettering

By PROF. ALFRED ERDMANN, *de l'École des Arts Décoratifs de Strasbourg*, and ADOLPHE A. BRAUN. With a Prefatory Note by G. M. ELLWOOD.

The present treatise has in view intending letterers who wish to teach themselves, but the text and instructions are set forth in such a way that experts also can obtain the necessary data on the subject.

"A very practical and well-presented handbook illustrating many modern and attractive styles both of drawn lettering and of type, with useful technical information for the student."—*Drawing and Design.*

Size 9½ in. by 6½ in., 144 pp., with 59 full-page plates in colour and in black and white, and numerous illustrations. **10s. 6d.** net. Second Edition.

Writing and Illuminating and Lettering

By EDWARD JOHNSTON.

". . . This book belongs to that extremely rare class in which every line bears the impress of complete mastery of the subject. We congratulate Mr. Johnston on having produced a work at once original and complete."—*The Athenaeum.*

In small crown 8vo, 512 pp., with 227 illustrations and diagrams by the author and NOEL ROOKE, 8 pp. of examples in red and black, 24 pp. of half-tone reproductions. **8s. 6d.** net. Fifteenth Edition.

Plain and Ornamental Lettering

By EDWIN G. FOOKS.

A Practical Guide to Ticket and Showcard Writing, Sign Writing, and other forms of Decorative Lettering, with numerous examples and detailed instructions for the amateur.

Size 9½ in. by 6½ in., 86 pp., with 40 full-page plates. **3s. 6d.** net.

"The sign-writer will find a host of ideas and suggestions in this book, which should certainly be in the possession of every amateur."—*Advertising World.*

Training in Commercial Art

By VERNEY L. DANVERS.

A complete course of instruction in the principles and technique of drawing and design for commercial purposes, profusely illustrated with original sketches and diagrams. It elucidates, in a practical manner, the problems which beset the novice, and is intended to guard him against the possibility of producing unmarketable work, and to eliminate all unnecessary labour. Chapters have been added on the designing of fancy costumes.

Size 10 in. by 8 in., cloth, 180 pp., illustrated. **21s.** net.

"It is everywhere apparent that the author is writing from genuine practical acquaintance with the problems he discusses." —*Artwork.*

CONTENTS

PLATE		PAGE
	Introduction	5
	Examples of Pens and Patterns	11
I.	Simplest Form of Alphabet—Capitals	12
II.	Simplest Form of Alphabet—Lower Case	14
III.	Applications to Metal Work and a Poster	16
IV.	Modified Form Applied to a Book Cover	18
V.	Roman Alphabet—Capitals	20
VI.	Roman Alphabet—Lower Case	22
VII.	Application to Writing and Carving	24
VIII.	Application to Magazine Cover	26
IX.	Script Alphabet—Capitals	28
X.	Script Alphabet—Lower Case	30
XI.	Script Ornaments	32
XII.	Application to Writing	34
XIII.	Application to Illuminating	36
XIV.	Gothic Alphabet (Tudor)—Capitals	38
XV.	Gothic Alphabet (Tudor)—Lower Case	40
XVI.	Application to Illuminating	42
XVII.	Application to Christmas Card	44
XVIII.	Gothic Alphabet (Black Letter) Capitals	46
XIX.	Application to Christmas Card	48
XX.	A Graceful Alphabet	50
XXI.	Application to Book Cover	52
XXII.	Other Applications	54
XXIII.	Ornamental Initial Letters	56
XXIV.	Monograms	58

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/exampleofletteri0000jlit

INTRODUCTION

NOTWITHSTANDING the number of books concerned with Lettering, the present volume can claim justification on account of its distinct purpose. It is not addressed solely to the professional but to all who desire to do decorative writing for the pleasure of expressing their artistic preferences. It does more than provide the reader with certain accepted standard alphabets. It suggests methods for personal variations and many applications to practical purposes suited to the needs of all who are conscious of the limitations of the finest stereotyped printing, and who feel that the making, arranging, and application of beautiful lettering is just as much an art as the painting of a picture.

Some of the alphabets in this book have already appeared in the author's "Art for All" drawing series, in a form suitable for school pupils and elementary students. The present work represents a considerable extension, so as to be of greater service to all who are interested in the art of beautiful writing. Several of the plates are here printed in two colours, thus revealing fresh interests and additional possibilities.

All western alphabets are constructed on a few basic shapes—symbolical abstractions, such as the square, circle, and triangle. The extensions and variations have arisen

mainly out of the influences of the materials by which and on which they are written—chisel, pen, brush, stone, metal, and paper.

Here, as in every art, it is essential to recognize frankly and accept freely the limitations imposed by inevitable conditions, so as to be able to do with each what can be done most expressively with the greatest ease and pleasure.

This is not a suggestion to shirk difficulties which ought to be faced ; but rather to face facts and to act with them instead of against them. The principal reason why the necessary skill to write and apply good lettering is at present confined to a few, is that certain alphabets have been placed on a pedestal of popularity—alphabets which require long and arduous training, slow execution, and elaborate care. If beautiful decorative writing is to be revived as a popular art rather than a professional occupation, it is absurd to place unnecessary difficulties in the way of its performance. With a little systematic study and application, almost anyone who is genuinely interested can soon master a few alphabets of great beauty, and use them in many attractive and useful ways.

Most of us want to write on paper, not to chisel on stone. But until recent times we have been discouraged from making freely-flowing alphabets, because we have been the slaves of a canon of taste which has decreed that the Roman alphabet on the Trajan column is the finest for all purposes. Certainly the Trajan alphabet is splendid ;

but there is no doubt that it can be written well only with extreme slowness, and that every inaccuracy is painfully obvious. Because it is not a pen-made alphabet for common use, but a chisel-made alphabet for the trained carver—a highly specialized craftsman. As an example of dignified proportion it is incomparable, and the finest basis for all personal variations. But the skill required to copy it with speed and accuracy is too much to expect of many, except professional decorative writers. This alphabet is so nearly perfect that it admits of very little variation. Only in a few subtleties can we safely differ from the original. And in any case we can never hope to write it readily. That would be beyond the powers of all except the most abnormally skilful, and therefore outside the range of nearly all who wish to use beautiful writing as a reasonably simple means of artistic self-expression.

These considerations have prompted the author to lay greater than usual emphasis upon these alphabets which, after a certain amount of practice, can be written " straight off," and not to concentrate on those forms which have to be sketched in pencil, drawn in outline with painful care, filled in with a fine brush, always with a fear that some minor blemish will stand out as a glaring error.

We cannot do better than go to the scribes of the Middle Ages for inspiration. Their manuscripts are not killed by meticulous regularity, but are alive with the creative joy of the artist who never hesitates to exercise a well-controlled fancy. If the writer is so constrained that he cannot express his personal preferences by variations,

decorative writing must of necessity be a dull performance and not an act of happy creation.

This is not an advocacy of thoughtless wayward freakishness. Certain facts create conditions which have to be recognized, and every writer must shape his course accordingly.

(1) All writing must be legible. Letters must be so spaced that the work is a coherent whole.

(2) The space must be so arranged that the whole body of lettering is easy to read and pleasant to contemplate. Decoration can seldom afford to enrich at the expense of clearness.

(3) Concern for purpose must necessarily influence style and arrangement. The same alphabet, treated in the same way, cannot serve equally well for all circumstances. In a poster the letters must be simple, strong, and clear, so as to be read easily at a distance. For more intimate purposes, when the writing is always seen near at hand and lingered over, such as a book plate, a greeting card, or a monogram, a certain amount of fanciful complexity may give an added charm. But when any lettering approaches in difficulty of solution a game of chess or a cross-word puzzle, it has passed beyond the limits of popular appeal.

It is to be hoped that no one who studies this book will plod through the practice of all the alphabets with painfully laboured steps before commencing to use them. As soon as one alphabet can be written with tolerable accuracy, speed, and pleasure, it should be applied to some fitting

purpose, and the remainder of the necessary practice attained in attempting the application. There can be nothing more destructive of real progress than the old-time soulless copy-book style of learning. Practise by doing : perfect by application.

Nor is it suggested that any reader should attempt to master every alphabet. Few of us could be attracted by so many diverse styles, requiring so many varied methods and producing so many different effects. It is far better to begin by trying the alphabet which is most immediately attractive, and then to work out a few variations with some practical applications.

For the purposes of more joyful and expeditious performance, several pens have been invented which have done a great deal to revive the art by making much beautiful writing easily possible to others than the professional expert. There are two important differences between the new kind of pen and those which have hitherto been used : (1) variations in thickness can be produced without additional pressure, (2) much more ink can be held in the pen on account of its shape, or by the addition of reservoir attachments. By these means it is possible to make lines varying from quite thin to almost an inch wide (in some cases) in a single stroke. The obtainable range is so considerable that any kind of writing can be done, from the most delicate script to the boldest poster or showcard lettering. Another kind of pen, sometimes called " even-stroke," which produces a line of unvarying thickness, can also be procured in many sizes. A few of the different

kinds of pens which the author has tested are illustrated here. When these pens come into more general use there should be a great extension in the direction of ornamental features, in connection with lettering, made with the same pens. The few examples of borders in Plate XI give no adequate idea of the possibilities. Patterns of great elaboration and undoubted beauty can be produced, particularly by the " even-stroke " pen, just as readily as the simplest form of lettering, and should give a new impetus to pen-made decoration.

The choice of material on which to write is scarcely less important than that of the pens. Few writers ever become aware of the number of existing suitable papers. Every kind should be tried in the early stages of study, because the choice of alphabets and their treatment may be considerably influenced by the character of the selected paper.

As its title implies, this book is not a complete treatise on the subject. To some readers decorative writing will make such an insistent appeal that they will desire to become more deeply acquainted with the subject. Those who are attracted to the more commercial aspect should follow the study of this book by that of *Decorative Writing and Arrangement of Lettering*,[1] and those who are drawn to the more personal art of illumination, or to the historical aspect, should turn to that most complete and inspiring book, *Writing and Illuminating and Lettering*.[2]

[1] *Decorative Writing and Arrangement of Lettering* (Pitman, 10s. 6d.).
[2] *Writing and Illuminating and Lettering* (Pitman, 8s. 6d.)

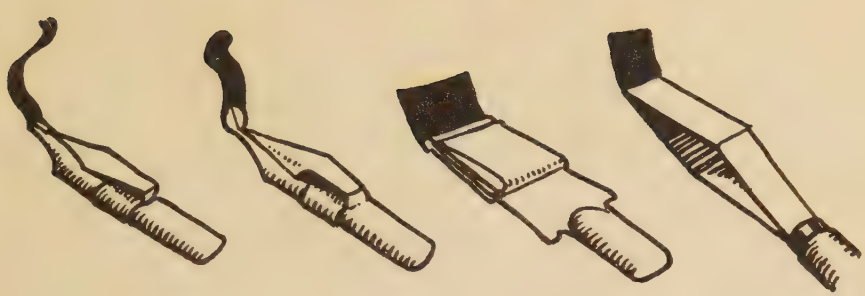


PLATE I

The simplest form of alphabet, based on the Roman. The lines are either straight, circular, or nearly circular ; in drawing them the greatest possible use should be made of ruler and compass. Note the relative widths of the letters. Several fit exactly into a square—A, M, etc. Some are slightly narrower, as G and N. One only, W, is wider. The others are narrower in varying degrees. These widths should be memorized. The widths of some letters will sometimes need to be altered to suit the occasion. But these standard shapes should be learned.

This style of letter is more easily read at a distance than any other. It is, therefore, particularly well suited for posters and showcards. But, drawn with thin lines, and with personal variations as suggested in the two bottom lines on the opposite page, many other purposes can be well served.

PLATE I

PLATE II

Small or " lower case " alphabet and numerals, to be used with the capitals on the previous page. These letters were written with an even-stroke pen (No. 2 illustrated on page 11), while the capitals on Plate II were written with a pen somewhat similar to No. 1. When used together both alphabets should be written with the same kind of pen. Note that almost every letter can be drawn with ruler and compass. The opportunity, and the need, for alterations in shape, is considerably less than in the use of capitals. Every letter should be memorized.

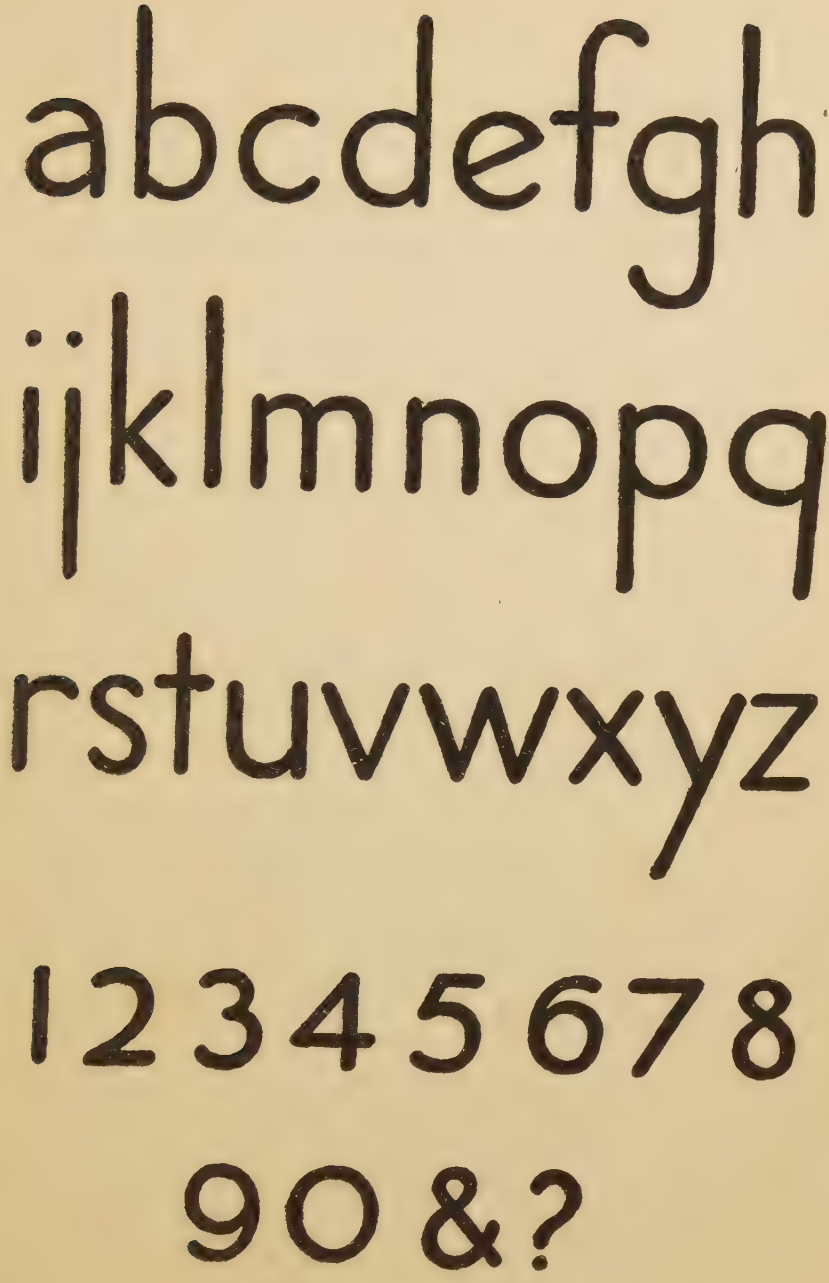


PLATE II

PLATE III

Two applications of the foregoing alphabet to practical purposes.

No. 1. A Letter-box. This is executed in beaten copper. The copper is laid face downwards on a bed of pitch, mixed with wax, and the letters and border are beaten in with a mallet and a steel tool with a rounded tip. Note that the letters are therefore rounded at the ends.

No. 2. A Travel Poster. The suitability of this alphabet for striking publicity is shown in this example, where legibility at a distance is the first consideration.

LETTERS

PLATE III

PLATE IV

This example shows how an alphabet can be modified and added to, according to personal taste. It is interesting to note similarities with the adaptation of the Tudor Gothic letters on page 39. Alphabets of this kind are best suited to intimate personal needs. They are only read easily near at hand, and can be used most reasonably for such purposes as the one illustrated here. After a little practice it should be possible to write this alphabet directly with a pen after arranging the spacing with a pencil. The simplest way to execute the cover on the opposite page is as follows: (1) write the letters on a small piece of white paper; (2) stick it on to a grey or brown cover; (3) paint the birds and lines with Chinese white.

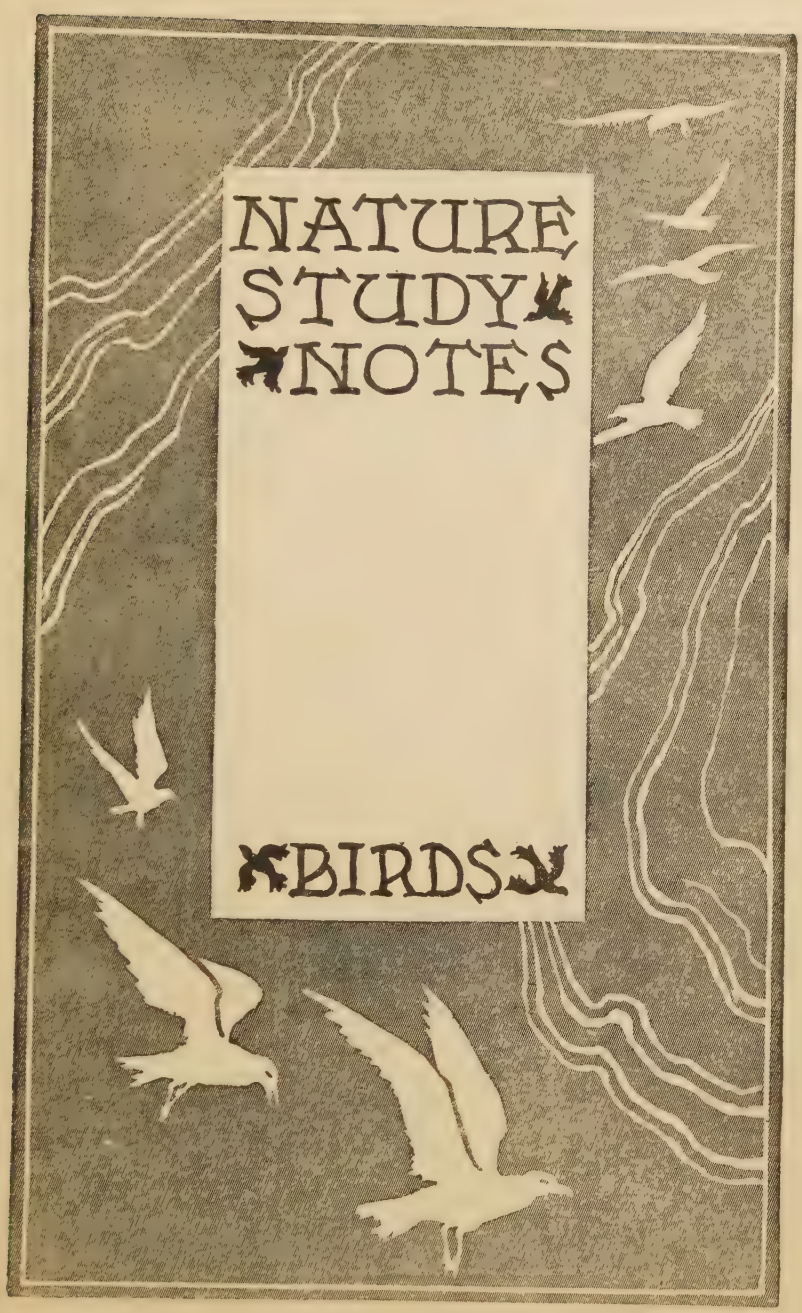


PLATE IV

PLATE V

This is universally agreed to be the finest alphabet in the western world. It is usually described as the Trajan alphabet, as it is based upon the letters inscribed upon the Trajan column in Rome (A.D. 114). It is the perfection of dignity and refinement, and is easily read except at a long distance. Variations are possible, in accordance with personal taste, provided that the general shape and proportions are not mutilated.

For the more striking forms of publicity, the strokes should be made thicker, and for more intimate purposes, such as book illustration, thinner strokes than those shown here are sometimes advisable.

The reader is advised to study carefully the many slight variations of this beautiful alphabet, to be found on tablets, tombstones, title pages of books, and elsewhere.

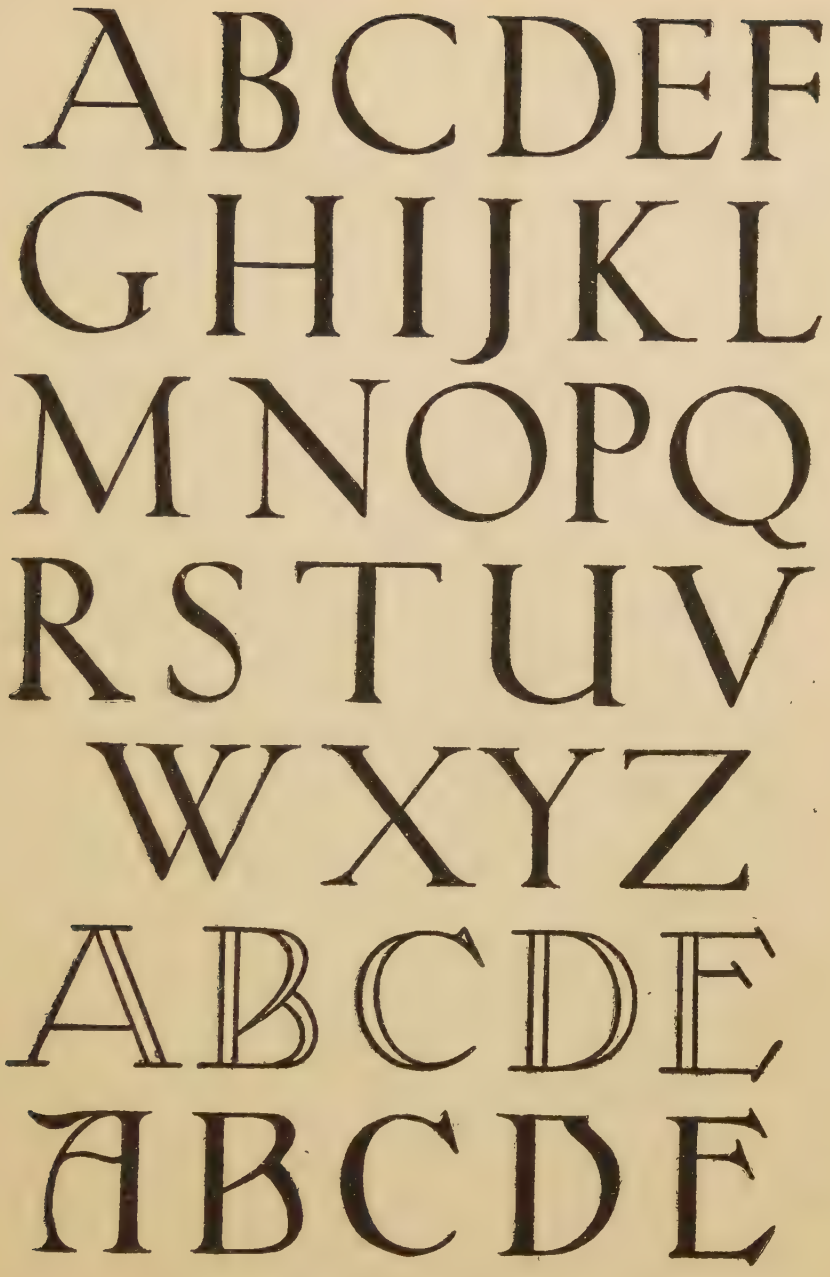


PLATE V

PLATE VI

" Lower case " letters and numerals, suitable for use with the Trajan alphabet.

These letters should be practised until they can be executed directly with a pen after preliminary faint sketching with a pencil.

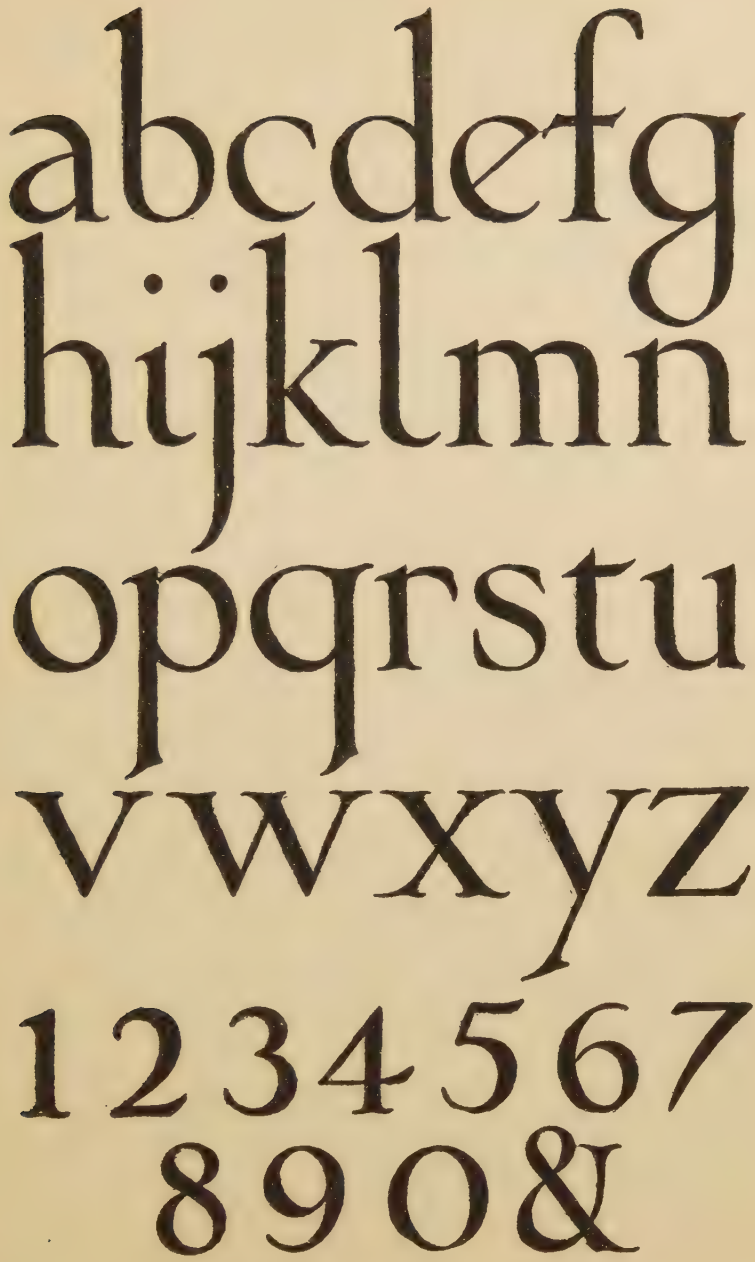


PLATE VI

PLATE VII

Two applications of the Trajan alphabet to practical purposes—

No. 1. A Concert Ticket. This is a simplified version which, with the exception of the numeral, can soon be written with ease and speed. It is an adaptation well suited to the need for duplication by hand.

No. 2. An Incised Inscription. This was the original purpose of the Trajan alphabet, cut in stone with a chisel. Generally the cut is V-shaped as in the illustration.

Old tombstones often provide very beautiful examples of this craft and should be studied.

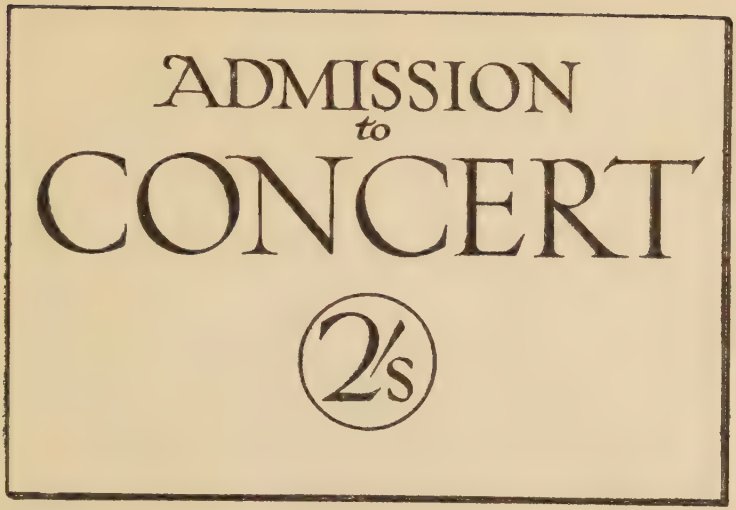


PLATE VII

PLATE VIII

Another application of the Trajan alphabet, with appropriate " lower case " letters, to a practical purpose.

Note the interesting effect of the subordination of the monogram by the use of thinner strokes.

The use of two colours permits of the use of heavy ornament without a loss of balance.

PLATE VIII

PLATE IX

Pen-made capitals, often termed "Script," are best written with specially constructed pens, so that the thick strokes are made by varying the direction of the pen and not by greater pressure. These pens are obtainable in several shapes and sizes, some so large that letters up to four inches in depth can be drawn directly and quickly.

The alphabet should be practised until it can be written almost as readily as ordinary writing.

Of all alphabets Script is best suited to purposes where a large quantity of letters must be done quickly by hand.

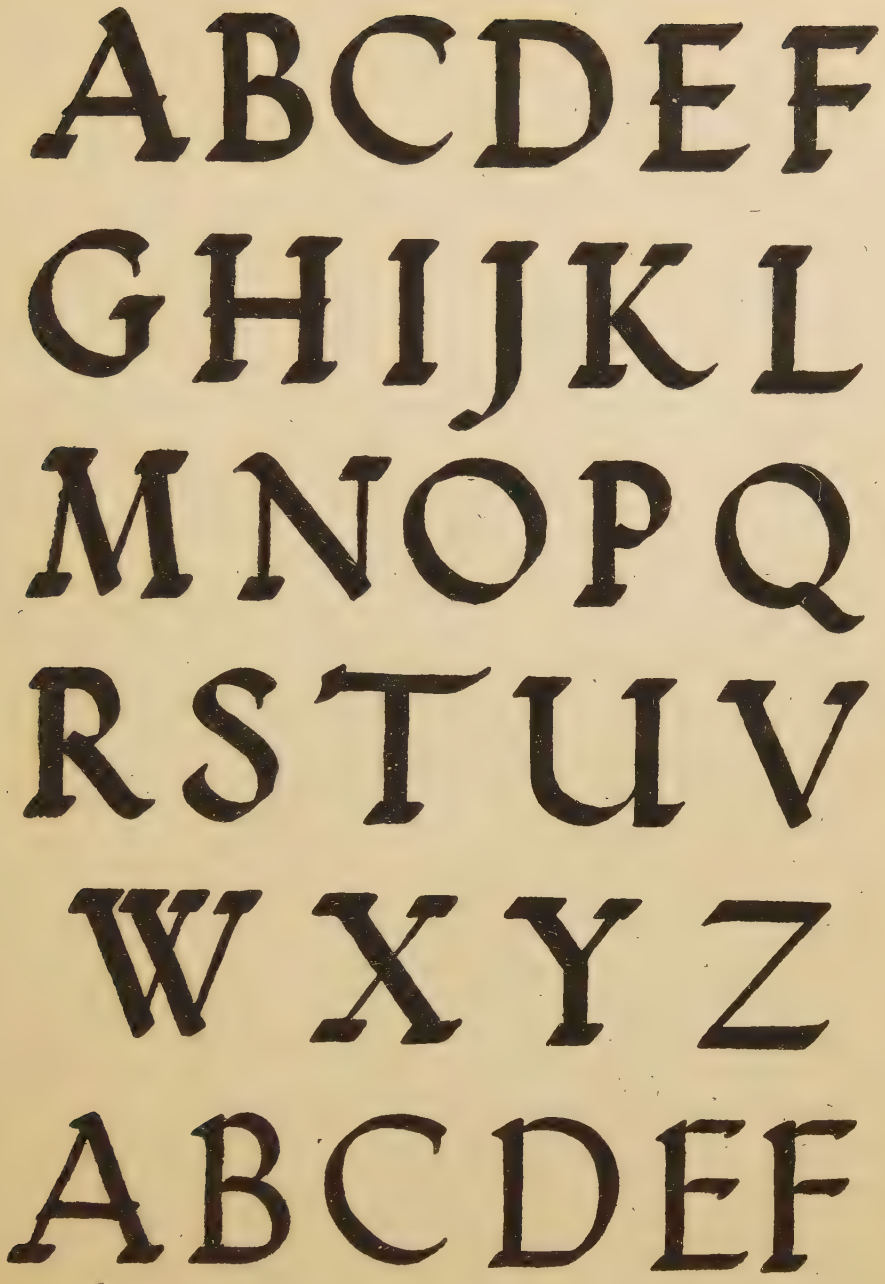


PLATE IX

PLATE X

" Lower case " Script letters, suitable for use with the pen-made capitals. These letters are a simplified version of the " lower case " Gothic letters on page 41, and can be used with a simplified form of Gothic capitals.

They are especially well suited to the writing of verse and other manuscript.

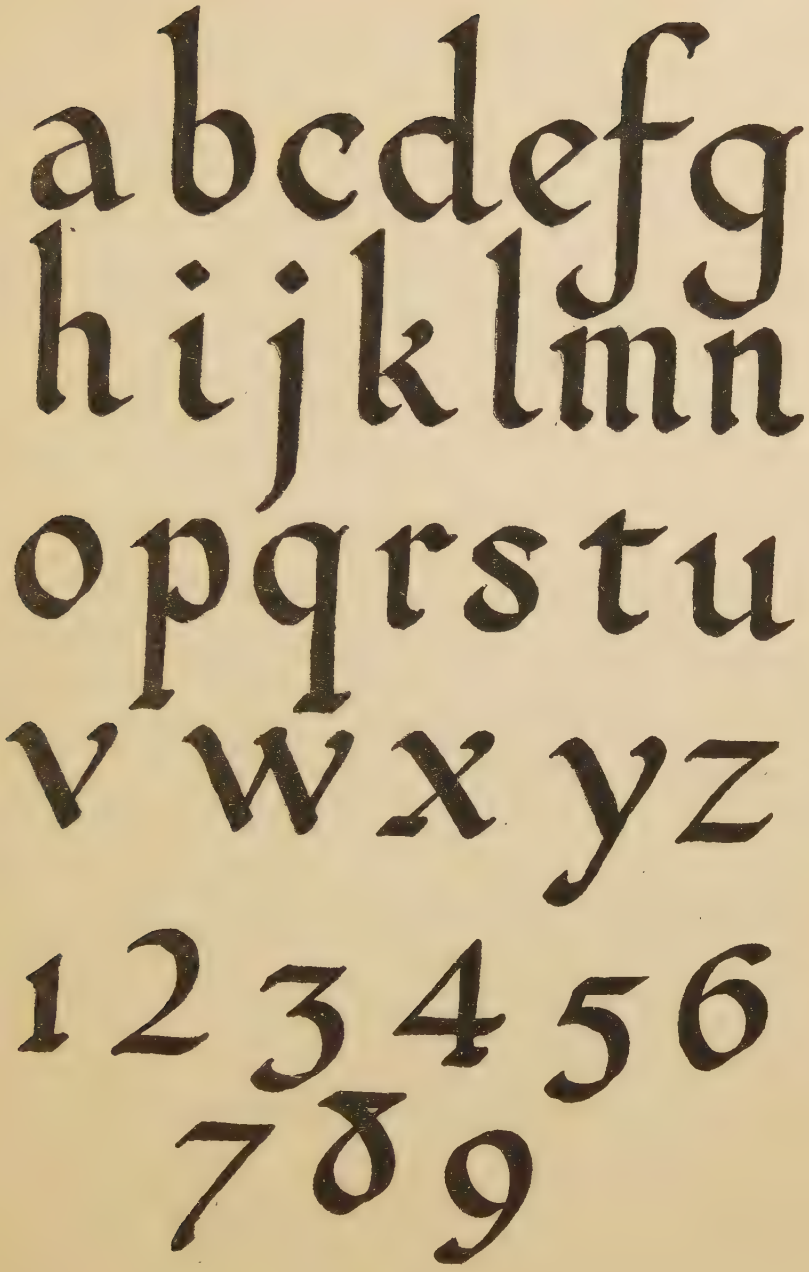


PLATE X

PLATE XI

Ornamental flourishes and borders which naturally arise out of the use of a Script pen. These add interest and decorative effect. The borders are generally more effective, because subordinated, when written with a thinner pen than that used for the letters.

PLATE XI

3—(1251)

PLATE XII

Two applications of the Script alphabets to practical purposes—

No. 1. A Notice. This can be written with three pens of different widths—the widest for the word " shut " and the narrowest for the border.

No. 2. A Programme. A combination of Script and the alphabet on Plates I and II. This is a particularly suitable purpose for the use of these types of writing, where variety, interest, legibility, and quickness of execution are required. If the red ink is considered too startling, some quieter colour such as purple, green, or brown might well be substituted.

PROGRAMME

PART·I	PART·II
1. Glee..... The Choir	5. Piano Solo.... A. Bee
2. Piano Solo... C. Jones	6. Song ..... E. Dick
3. Song ..... J. Tom	7. Violin Solo... C. Dow
4. Violin Solo.. B. Smith	8. Glee ..... The Choir

GOD·SAVE·THE·KING

PLATE XII

PLATE XIII

Another application of Script letters: in fact, one of the original uses.

There is a wealth of material to provide the reader with information and inspiration for this fascinating use of ornamental writing. Many of the MSS. written in the Middle Ages, preserved in museums and reproduced in many books on the subject, are of extraordinary beauty. They should be studied and copied by all who wish to excel in this branch of writing.

Here in the country's heart
Where the grass is green
Life is the same sweet life
As it e'er hath been

Trust in a God still lives
And the bell at morn
Floats with a thought of God
O'er the rising corn

God comes down in the rain
And the crops grow tall
This is the country's faith
And the best of all

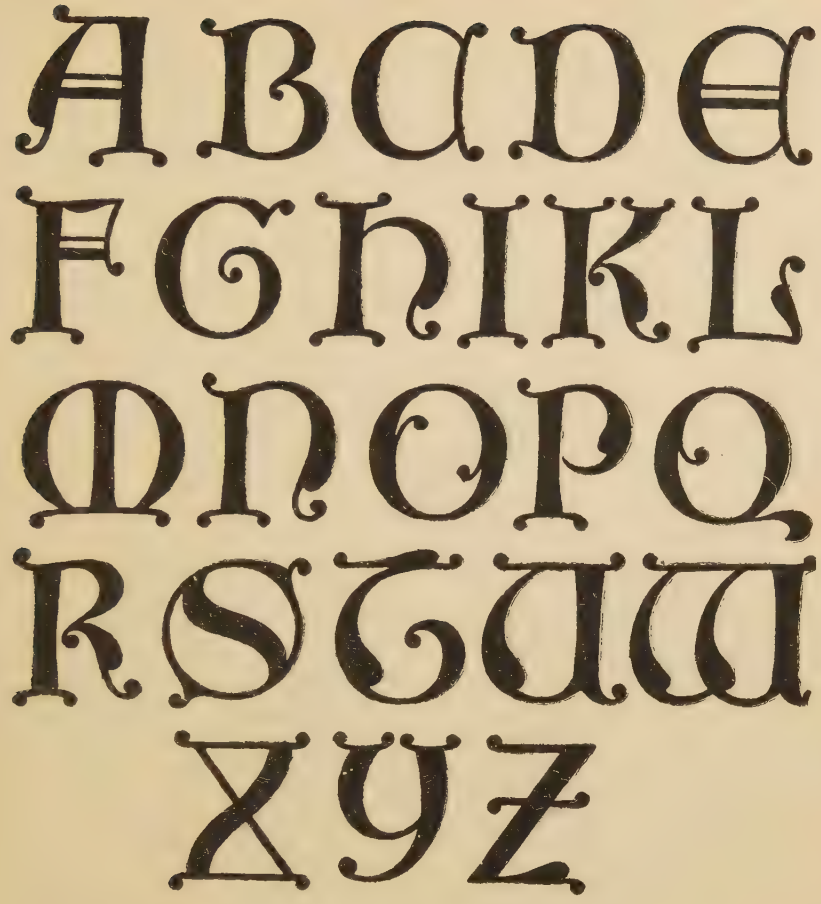
Norman Gale

PLATE XIII

PLATE XIV

Gothic capitals, sometimes called " Tudor " to distinguish them from the " Black Letter " Gothic on page 47. These letters abound, in many variations, on tablets and in carvings of the sixteenth century. The alphabet on the opposite page is a standard form, but it can be varied to almost any extent with interesting results.

The simplified form shown below is very serviceable, as it is legible as well as interesting, and can be well written with ease and speed after comparatively short practice.



ABCDEFGHIJ
KLMNOPQRS
TUVWXYZ

PLATE XIV

PLATE XV

Two forms of Gothic " lower case " : the first suitable for use with the Tudor and the second with the " Black Letter " capitals.

The numerals are suitable for the Black Letter alphabet only, but they can easily be modified to suit the Tudor alphabet.

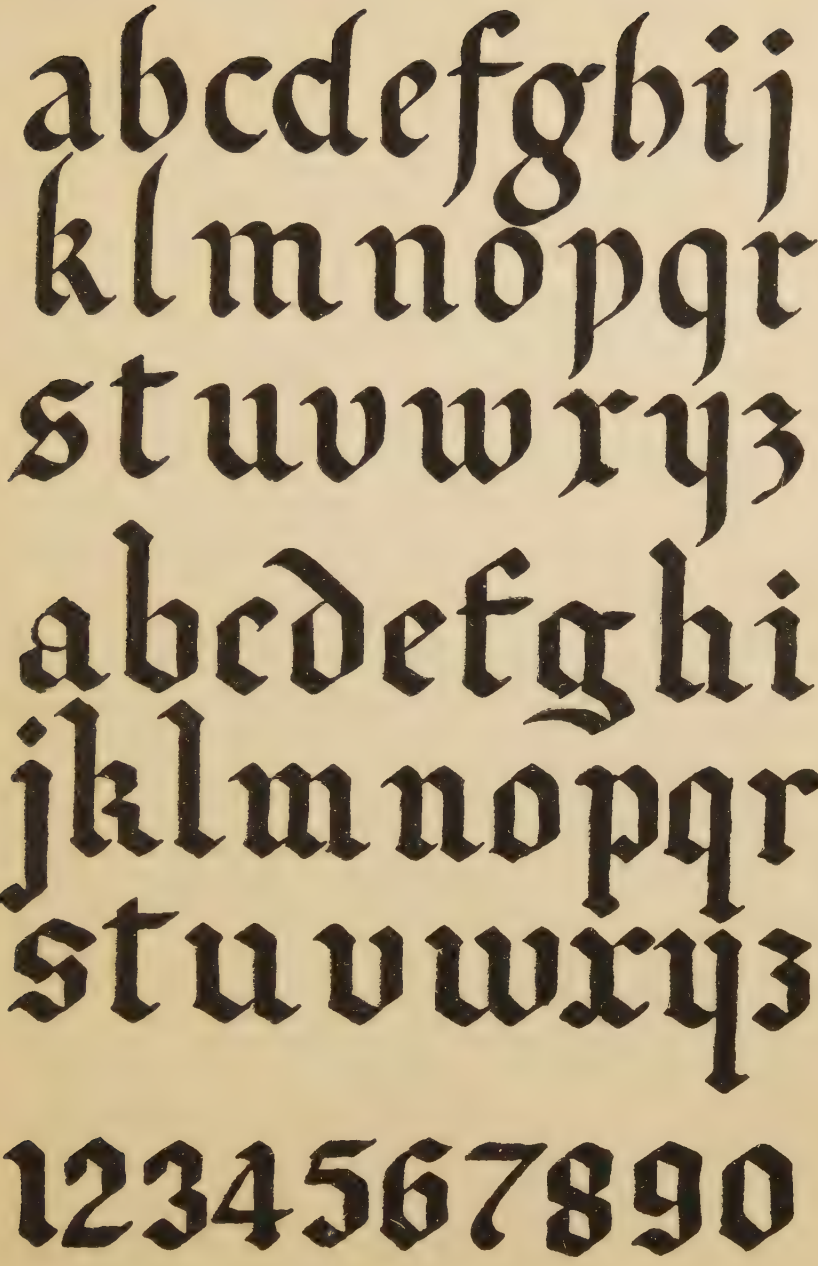

abcdefghij
klmnopqr
stuvwxyz
abcdefghi
jklmnopqr
stuvwxyz
1234567890

PLATE XV

PLATE XVI

One of the most interesting, as well as suitable, present-day uses for this mediaeval alphabet, capable of elaboration to any extent demanded by the subject.

It is most effective when written on vellum, emblazoned with gold. The art of illuminating is one of great beauty and extensive possibilities, requiring considerable study of original examples and authoritative works upon the subject. The example given here is sufficiently simple to form an introduction to the study.

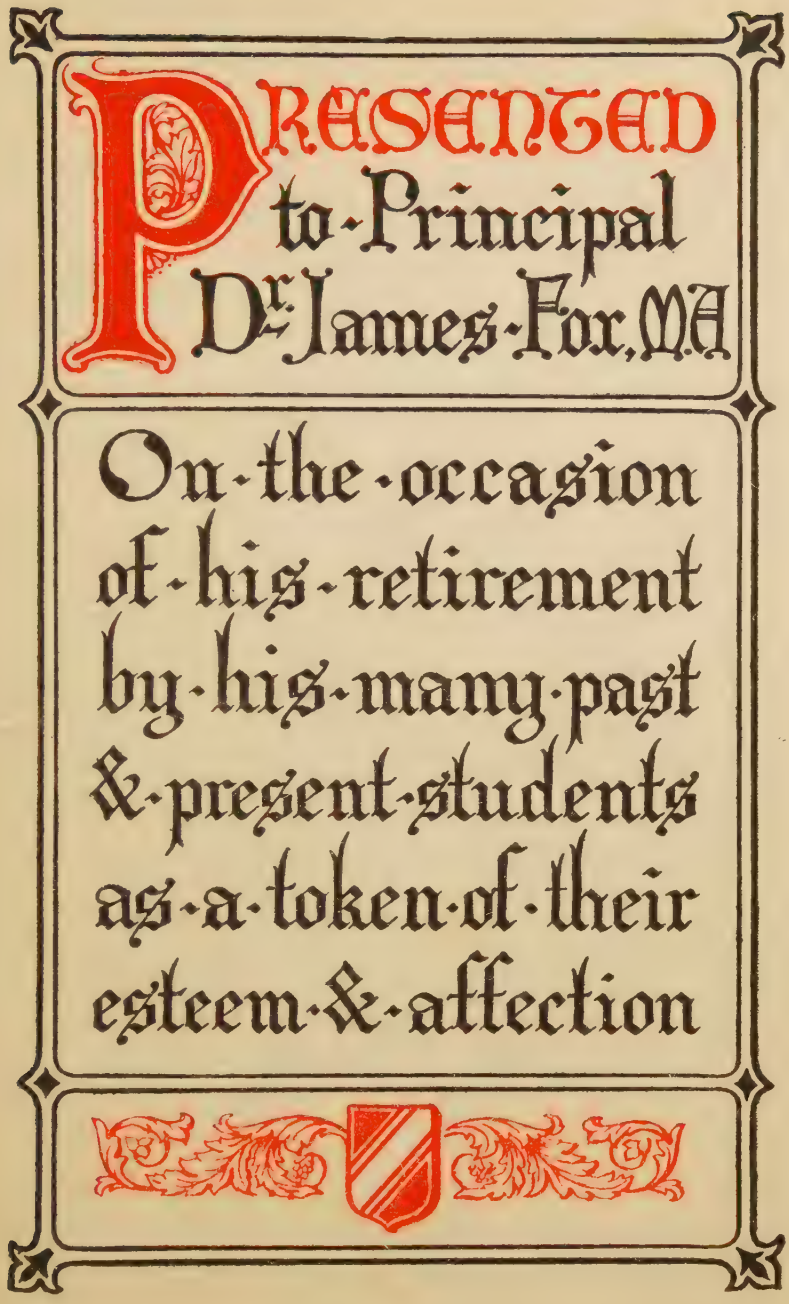

PRESENTED
to Principal
Dr James Fox, MA
On the occasion
of his retirement
by his many past
& present students
as a token of their
esteem & affection

PLATE XVI

PLATE XVII

An adaptation of the simplified form of Gothic lettering shown on page 39.

The effect can be greatly improved by the use of colours and gold. The outlines should be drawn in indelible inks on smooth stout handmade drawing paper, preferably with uncut edges.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

FROM

.....

TO

.....

PLATE XVII

PLATE XVIII

The form of Gothic capitals known as " Black Letter."

Its present-day uses are confined mainly to purposes where antiquity needs to be suggested, and where legibility is not of primary importance. It has a distinctive richness and lends itself to ornate decoration. There are many varieties and some, particularly the Italian, are exceedingly graceful.

The alphabet should be written, directly, with a broad pen.

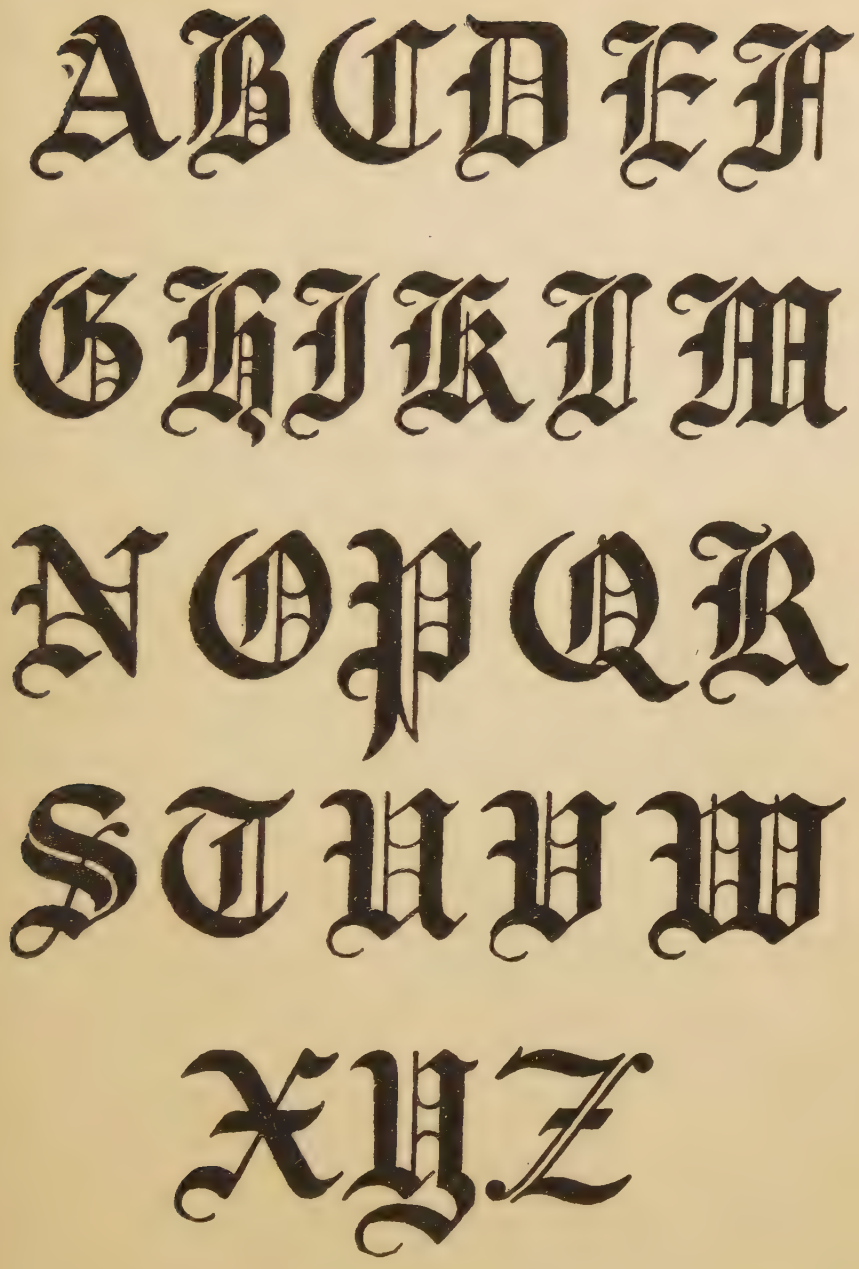


PLATE XVIII

PLATE XIX

An adaptation of the Gothic " Black Letter " alphabet to a suitable purpose.

The design will be greatly improved by the use of colour and gold. It should be outlined in indelible inks upon smooth heavy handmade paper, preferably with uncut edges.

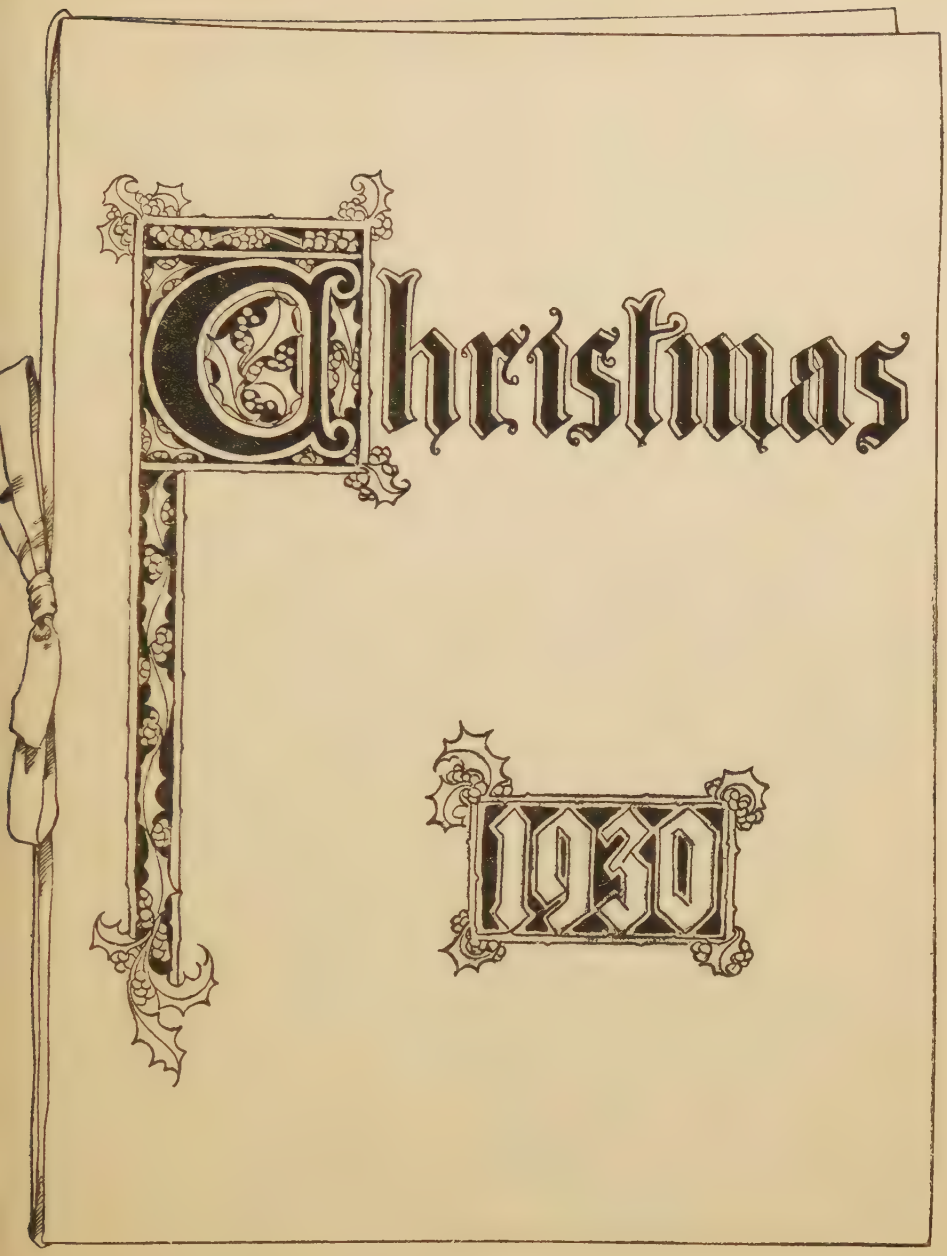


PLATE XIX

—(1251)

PLATE XX

A graceful alphabet, with two variations, and capable of many others. It arises naturally out of handwriting with an ordinary pen, and can be applied successfully to subjects where a comparatively small scale of letter is required, such as title pages and book plates.

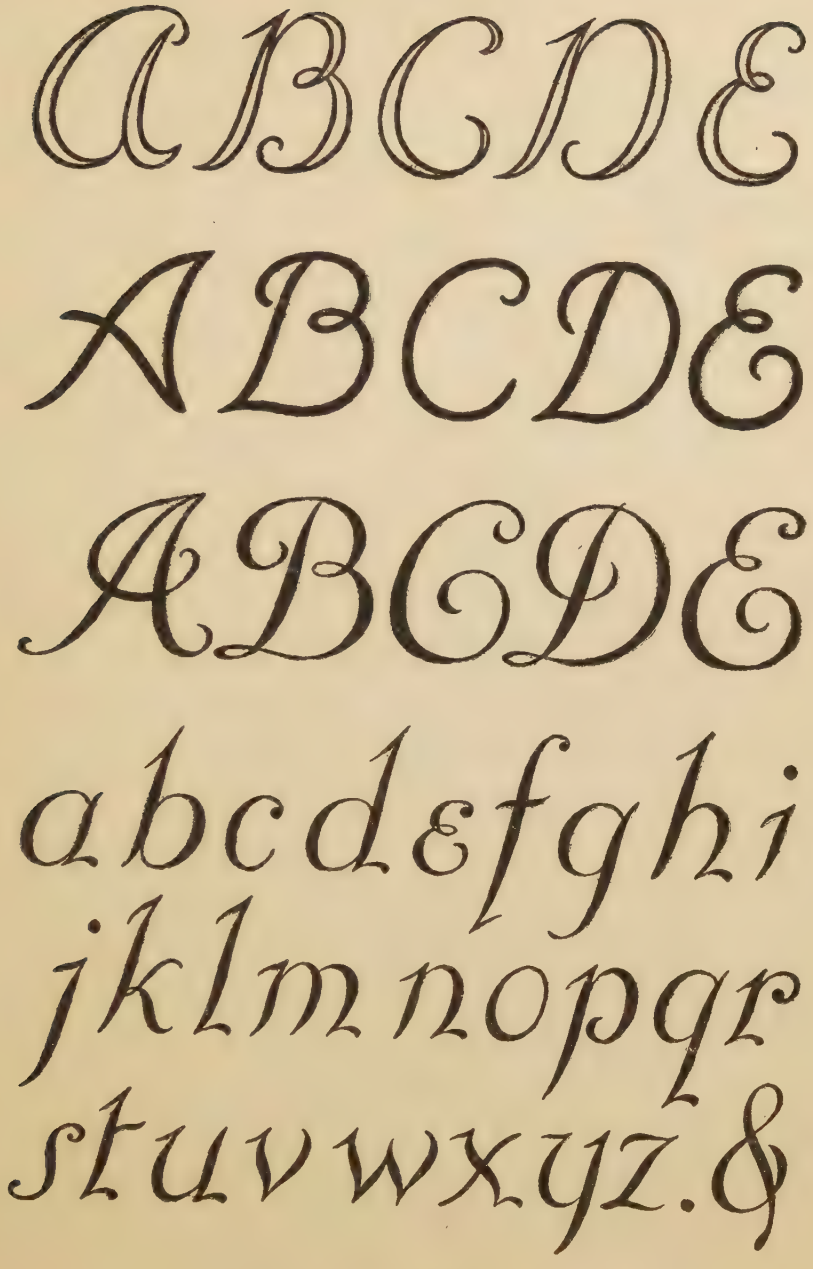


PLATE XX

PLATE XXI

An application of the alphabet on the preceding page to a suitable purpose—a book cover.

The effect can be greatly enhanced by the use of colour, either for the lettering or the picture within the circle.

PLATE XXI

PLATE XXII

Other applications of the same alphabet to suitable purposes.

The reader is recommended to design his own book plate, using this style of alphabet, and introducing his name or monogram.

This style of lettering is used in one of the monograms on page 59.

VAN DIEMAN

51 Wand St.

Works of Art

PLATE XXII

PLATE XXIII

A page of initial letters ornamented in various styles.

The designing of an initial letter calls for considerable ingenuity and taste. As a rule, the ornament should be evenly distributed, and not obtrusive, but should enhance the importance and beauty of the letter.

The principal uses of ornamented letters of this kind are for illuminated manuscripts and the decoration of books.

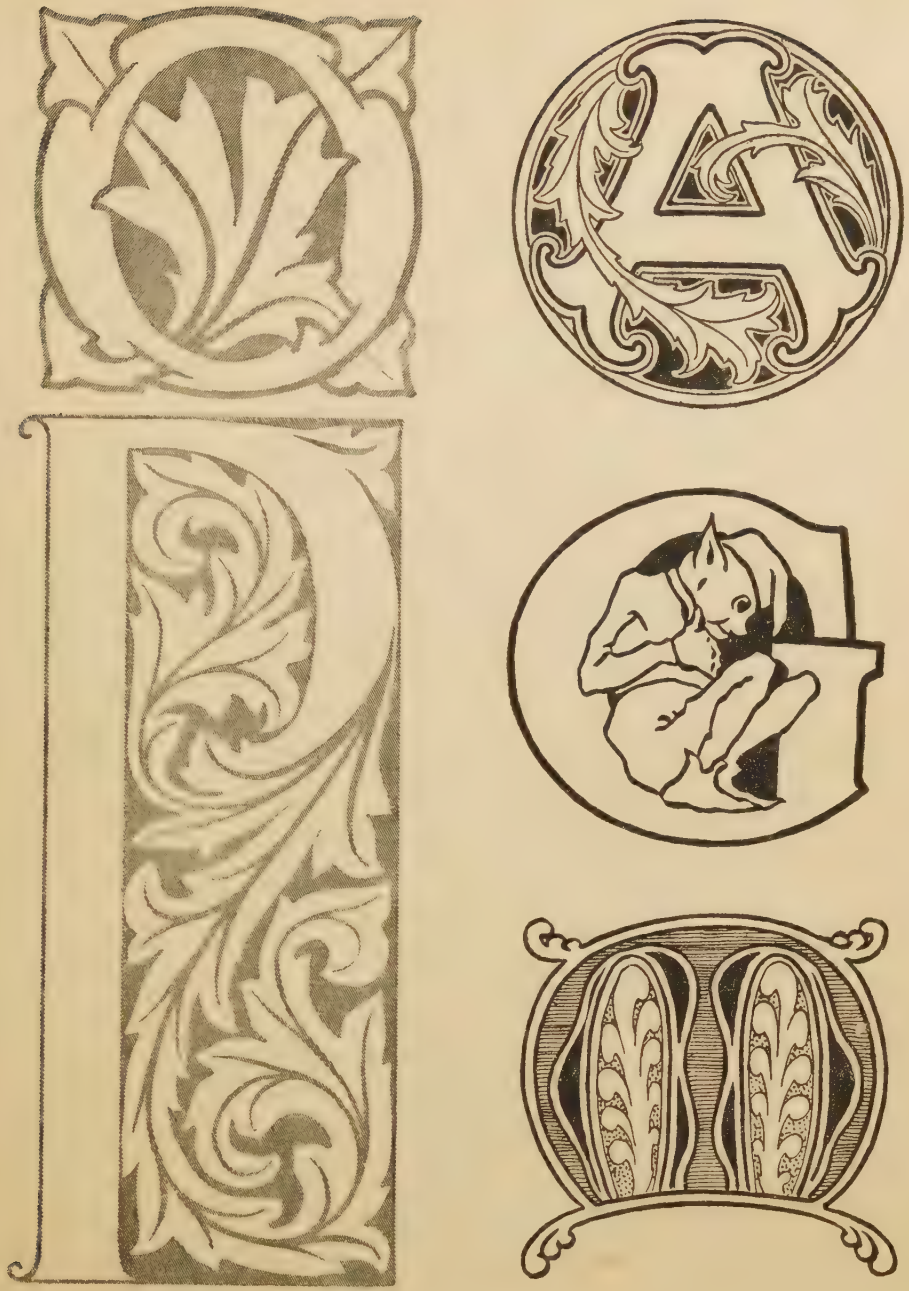


PLATE XXIII

PLATE XXIV

The designing of monograms can almost be regarded as an art in itself. It calls for much adroitness and considerable powers of design, largely on account of the limitations imposed.

Monograms serve a large number of purposes, both public and private. Among the former may be mentioned trade marks and publishers' initials in books ; and among the latter, book plates.

PLATE XXIV

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT THE PITMAN PRESS, BATH
B8—(1251)

REEVES' MANUSCRIPT PENS

REEVES' MANUSCRIPT PENS. 6 nib-widths, Nos. 1 to 6, per doz., 4½d., per gross of a single number 4s.

RESERVOIRS FOR ABOVE, adjustable and fitting any pen per dozen 4½d.

PENHOLDER FOR ABOVE, polished . . . per dozen 2s.

CARD OF 12 MANUSCRIPT PENS and 2 RESERVOIRS Each 6d.

REEVES' MANUSCRIPT INK

To obtain the best results in Formal Writing a solid carbon ink is necessary. In Schools of Art Reeves' Fixed Indian Ink or Artist Black is recommended. For Elementary Schools, Reeves' Manuscript Ink is specially prepared. This ink must be used from well-corked bottles, not ink wells. It can be thinned with plain water if allowed to thicken by evaporation.

		s.	*d.*
HALF-OUNCE BOTTLES	FOR CLASS WORK	0	4½
STOCK BOTTLES . .	ONE PINT	5	0
,,	ONE QUART	9	0
,,	ONE GALLON	30	0

REEVES & SONS, LTD.

ASHWIN STREET, DALSTON, LONDON

THE STANDARD
of
GOLD LEAF

ESTABLISHED
1783

REG^D TRADE-MARK

TELEGRAMS
SMOOTHING
LONDON

The High Standard set in 1783 has been maintained ever since

IT IS INVARIABLE

GEO. M. WHILEY, LTD.

GOLD AND SILVER LEAF MANUFACTURERS

54, 56, 58 & 60 WHITFIELD STREET

LONDON, W.1

J. BRYCE SMITH, LTD.

ARTISTS' COLOURMEN

And Makers of
Brushes, Picture Frames, and Materials for
DRAWING PAINTING MODELLING
ETCHING DESIGNING HOMECRAFTS

Special Brushes and Pens for Ornamental
and Decorative Writing

QUILL PENS POSTER PENS
VELLUMS VELLUM PAPERS
MANUSCRIPT AND DRAWING PAPERS

The most replete Artists' Store in the Kingdom

PRICE LIST POST FREE

117 HAMPSTEAD ROAD
LONDON, N.W.1

Near Euston Stations *Telephone: Museum* 2085

Jos. Gillotts

BY APPOINTMENT

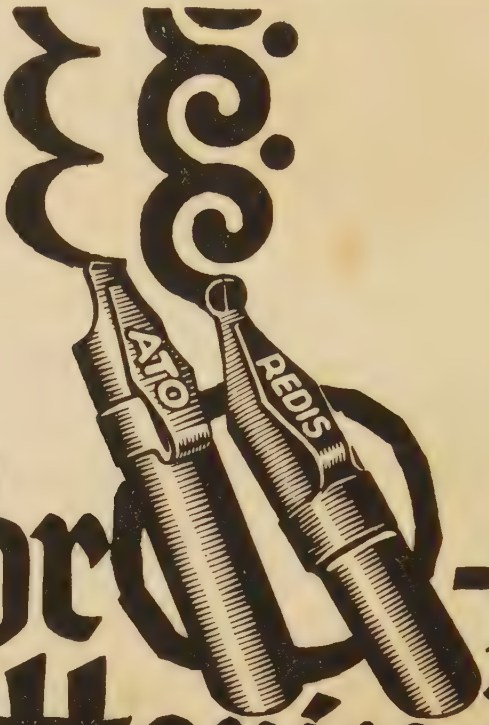
THE ARTIST whose particular forte is Ornamental Lettering and Writing is well acquainted with the steel pens made expressly for this class of work by the masters of Steel Pen Making—Joseph Gillott & Sons.

In the 5005 range of oblique points and the 1143 range of square points will be found a pen to suit every style of Lettering and Writing.

4/- per gross box.
Boxes of 3 dozen assorted 1/6.
Card of 11 pens one of each degree of point, 6d.

When ordering please state whether square or oblique points are required.

JOSEPH GILLOTT & SONS, LTD.,
PEN MAKERS TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING
VICTORIA WORKS, BIRMINGHAM



for Lettering and Design

Heintze & Blanckertz

Obtain the Pens from your Artist's Material Dealer

Write for particulars to: MR. H. G. SALOMONSOHN, London Representative
FULWOOD HOUSE, HIGH HOLBORN, W.C.1

KW-181-228